

Fortune's Follies

Robert Patrick O'Riley Fortune in the Pacific Air War

Peter Fortune



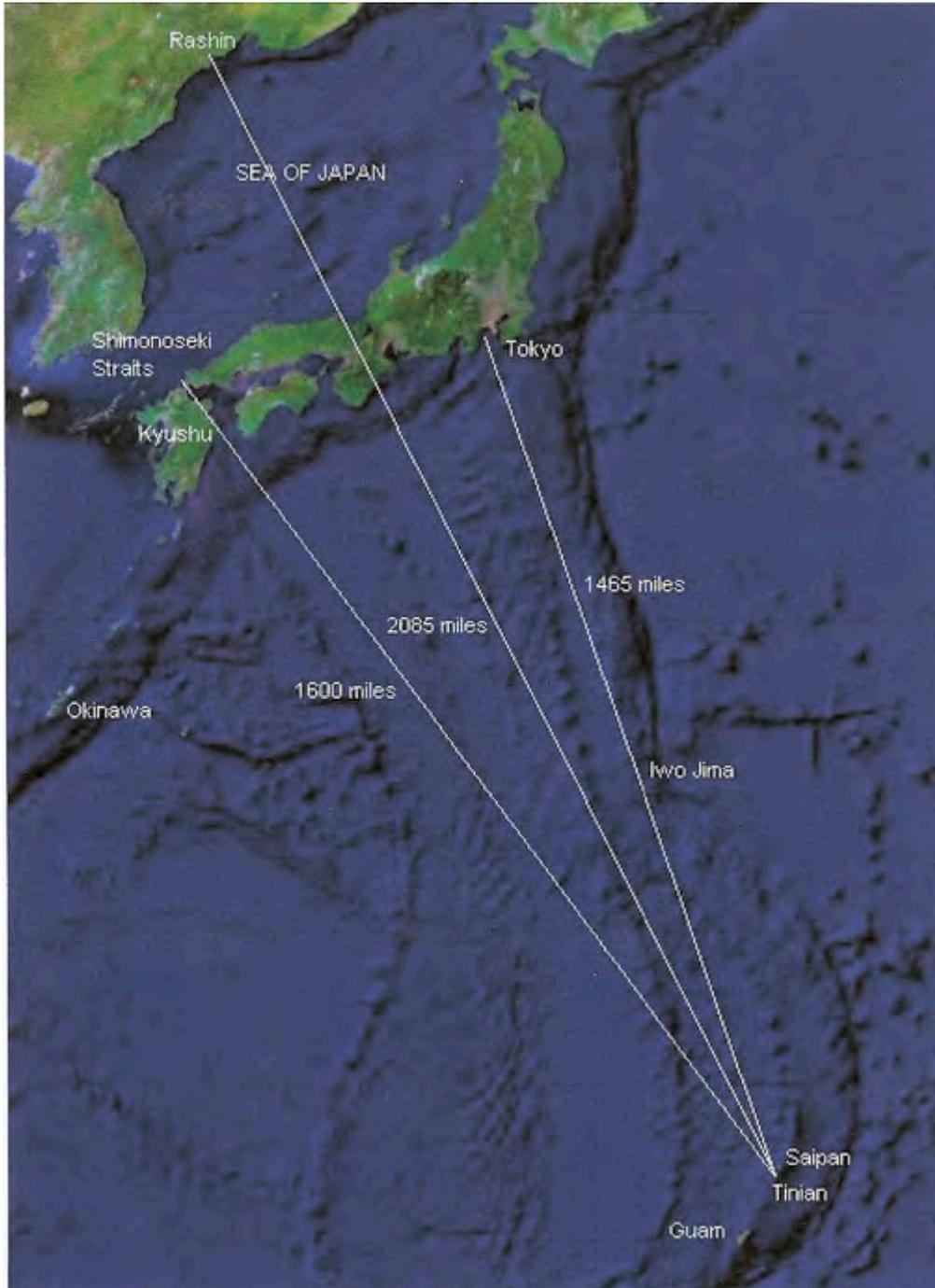
20th Army Air Force Logo

2011

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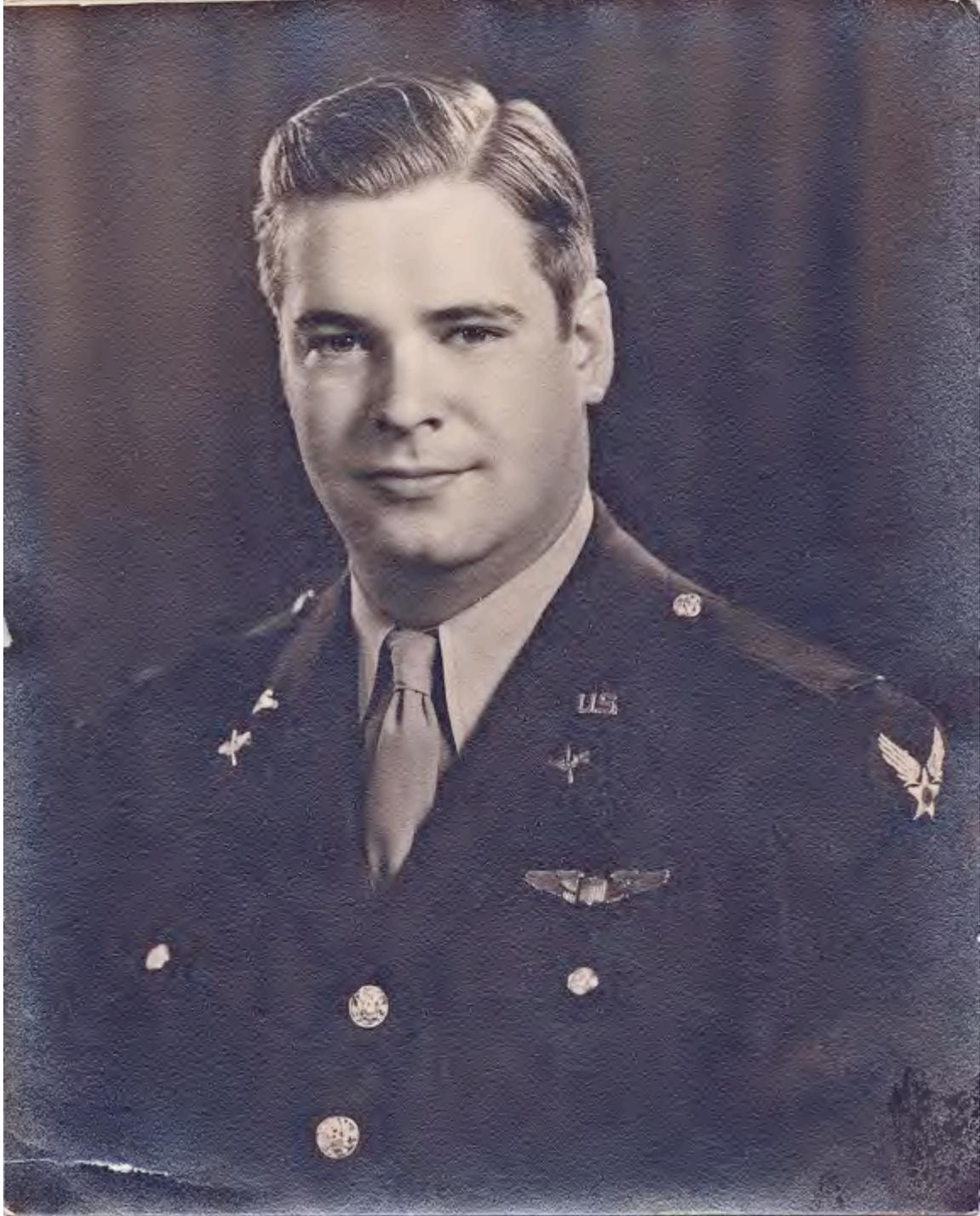
The Japanese Mainland



From Tinian to Tokyo...and Back



Shimonoseki Straits: The Western Access to Japan's Inland Sea
(Primary Area of Operation Starvation's Mining Missions)





CAPT. R. P. FORTUNE

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Preface

Born on September 16, 1919, Robert Patrick Fortune (O'Riley was a late and unofficial addition) was educated at Beau Cedre School in Lausanne Switzerland, at The Park School in Indianapolis, Indiana, and at Lawrenceville Academy near Princeton, New Jersey, from which he graduated in 1938. He matriculated in the class of 1942 at Princeton University. After two years at Princeton, he transferred to Purdue University as a special student, where he completed one semester. In the spring of 1941 Dad enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp, the predecessor of the U.S. Air Force, as an aviation cadet.

This report covers his war years, certainly the most exciting and productive years of his life. It is based on a variety of sources: thorough examination of his personnel records, information from his Bomb Group's association, a review of written records in books and on the internet, and an in-depth reading of Air Force records relating to him and to his Bomb Group.

While going through these materials I have encountered inconsistencies and errors in both primary and secondary materials. Where possible I have attempted to correct those errors, but undoubtedly some remain. They are sufficiently minor as to leave the broad story unchanged.

This work has benefitted greatly from the contributions of others. Ramon Holtzclaw, Dad's copilot, kept a diary in spite of military regulations prohibiting it; his daughter very generously made a copy available. This diary was essential in developing a timeline of events during that period. It also provided details that helped guide the search for additional information,

Sixty-five years ago my mother, Cathryn (Clements) Cowles created a scrapbook of clippings, letters, and reports on my father's experiences in the Pacific. My sister, Cathryn Reynolds Fortune, sent me the scrapbook after having its contents scanned for preservation. Important information about missions and experiences came from that scrapbook.

My cousin, Russell ("Jock") Fortune, preserved a collection of wartime letters from Dad to his parents. These had been kept in a safe at the family offices and saw the light of day when the safe was opened prior to moving to new office space. I am grateful to Jock for making them available.

Colonel Tom Culbert at the Aviation Information Research Corporation, a former B-52 pilot, did a great job tracking down information in the U.S. Air Force archives; his attention to detail picked up a number of valuable clues. The National Personnel Records Center provided Dad's complete personnel records, and the Air Force Historical Research Office made other materials available, including the complete file of 6th Bomb Group records through August 31, 1945 (Microfilm Reels B0059 and B0060, now available on compact disks).

Last, but definitely foremost, my wife, Joan, served as both encourager and editor. Without her support, her constructive insights, and her careful reading of numerous drafts, the clarity found here would not have been possible.

Thanks to All!

Peter Fortune
December 7, 2011

A Pilot In Training

Indianapolis, Indiana has had a varied economic history: an agricultural center in the 19th century; a manufacturing center in the early 20th century, producing automobiles like Marmon and Stutz; and a light industrial, financial, and distribution center in the latter 20th and early 21st centuries.

Indianapolis was also a military town, hosting Fort Benjamin Harrison. Constructed in the first decade of the 20th century, “Fort Ben” served as an infantry training center during World War II. Between the wars it held the Army Finance School, the Chaplain ‘s Training School, and a number of other noncombat training facilities. During WWII Fort Ben had the Army’s largest Reception Center for inductees, it was the base for training the Army’s 11th Infantry Regiment, and it held a POW camp. After the war Fort Ben was the Army’s Finance Center.

Dad enlisted at Fort Ben on March 17, 1941—Saint Patrick’s Day. His route to becoming an Army Air Force pilot began in Primary Pre-Flight Training at Sikeston, Missouri. For nine weeks, he enjoyed orientation to military culture, drill and physical training, Morse code instruction, refresher courses in math and physics, and basic flight instruction in Stearman biplanes, the primary first-level training plane of the day. On April 28, 1941, one month into his training, he experienced his first of many accidents when, approaching for a landing in a crosswind, he failed to adequately adjust for the drift and came in to the right of the runway. A sharp left turn resulted in the left wingtip scraping the ground. He righted the plane and landed with only a scraped wingtip.

On May 31, 1941, Dad completed Primary Training and was sent to Goodfellow Field in San Angelo, Texas, for Basic Flight Training. In this nine-week program he spent half of each day in ground school learning the fundamentals of navigation, flight theory, meteorology, and engine mechanics. The remainder of the day was spent in flight instruction.

Upon graduation on August 16, 1941—four years before cessation of hostilities in the Pacific on August 15, 1945—he went to Gunter Field (now Maxwell-Gunter Field) in Montgomery, Alabama. There he learned formation flying, instrument flying, night flying, and long-distance flying, all in more advanced training planes like the AT-6 Texan. This program ended with “classification:” each cadet was assigned to further training in either single-engine or multi-engine planes. Dad graduated from this three-week course on September 7, 1941, with an assignment to multi-engine planes.

His next stop was Advanced Flight Training at Turner Field in Albany, Georgia (a city near which his father would retire years later). Turner provided ground school in aircraft identification and map reading. It also gave additional flight instruction and instruction in aerial combat.

During his time at Turner Field, Dad was involved in a mid-air collision while flying a BC-1A (a variation on the AT-6 Texan, the advanced flight training plane *du jour*). The occasion was a formation flight on October 2, 1941. A fellow cadet was flying below Dad, out of his line of sight. The student in the lower plane got out of position, rising above his assigned flight level. A collision resulted. There was no serious damage to Dad’s plane, but the rudder (vertical tail) was chopped off the other plane. Its pilot bailed out and landed unscathed. His plane crashed and burned in a field

7½ miles northeast of Leesburg, Georgia. Training accidents were dime-a-dozen events, and this one had no fatalities and shared responsibilities (sixty percent of blame was assigned to Dad in spite of his instructor's statement that Dad could not have seen the second plane), so it was not a heavy black mark.

All combat aviators were trained in gunnery skills, so Dad's advanced flight training ended with a few weeks at Gunnery School at Eglin Military Reservation in Eglin, Florida. Finally, on October 31, 1941, he completed his training, received his wings as a brand-new Second Lieutenant (serial number 0429391), and was placed on active duty. The next day he married Cathryn "Catie" Clements in Richmond, Indiana.

After the honeymoon Dad was assigned to Maxwell-Gunter Field as a flight instructor. At Maxwell-Gunter he reversed his earlier role, becoming the instructor in the rear seat with a student pilot in the front seat. On August 14, 1942, precisely three years before the last B-29 combat mission of the Pacific air war, he was promoted to First Lieutenant and assigned to be an instructor in AT-6s and AT-9s at Blytheville Army Air Force Base in Blytheville, Arkansas.

His time at Blytheville was not without hazard. On August 27, 1942, two weeks after arrival, he had a taxiing accident—he was so focused on looking to his right and left for cross-traffic that he ran into a parked plane directly ahead. The investigating committee determined that he had been taxiing too fast. This was not his last accident at Blytheville. On April 13, 1943, a nose wheel collapsed on landing and the plane was seriously damaged; there were no injuries. This was judged to be a mechanical failure with no blame attached.

Blytheville was followed by an assignment to Freeman Army Airfield at Seymour, Indiana, as an instructor on AT-10s, commencing April 26, 1943. This was very close to his Indianapolis home, and to Mom's home in Richmond, Indiana, so I'm sure that it was a pleasant assignment. But it was short-lived: on June 22, 1943 he was sent to Hendricks Field at Sebring, Florida, as a student officer for flight training on the B-17, the four-engine Heavy Bomber that dominated the air war in Europe.

On November 6, 1943—nineteen months after enlisting—Dad was certified on multi-engine planes and became a B-17 flight instructor at Hendricks. All of his duty to this point had been stateside. But this was soon to change. On July 7, 1944, Dad was assigned to a combat unit: the 24th Bombardment Squadron, 6th Bombardment Group, 313th Bombardment Wing, 21st Bomber Command, 20th Army Air Force.

The 313th Bomb Wing was sent to Grand Island, Nebraska, for flight training in the newest bomber—the four-engine, very large, and very fast (for that time) B-29. The B-29 was destined for the Pacific, and B-29 Bomb Groups were in training at bases all around the U.S. On November 8, 1944, Dad was promoted to Captain, and on December 31, 1944, he became Air Commander for a crew of eleven men.



24th Bombardment Squadron Logo



6th Bombardment Group Logo

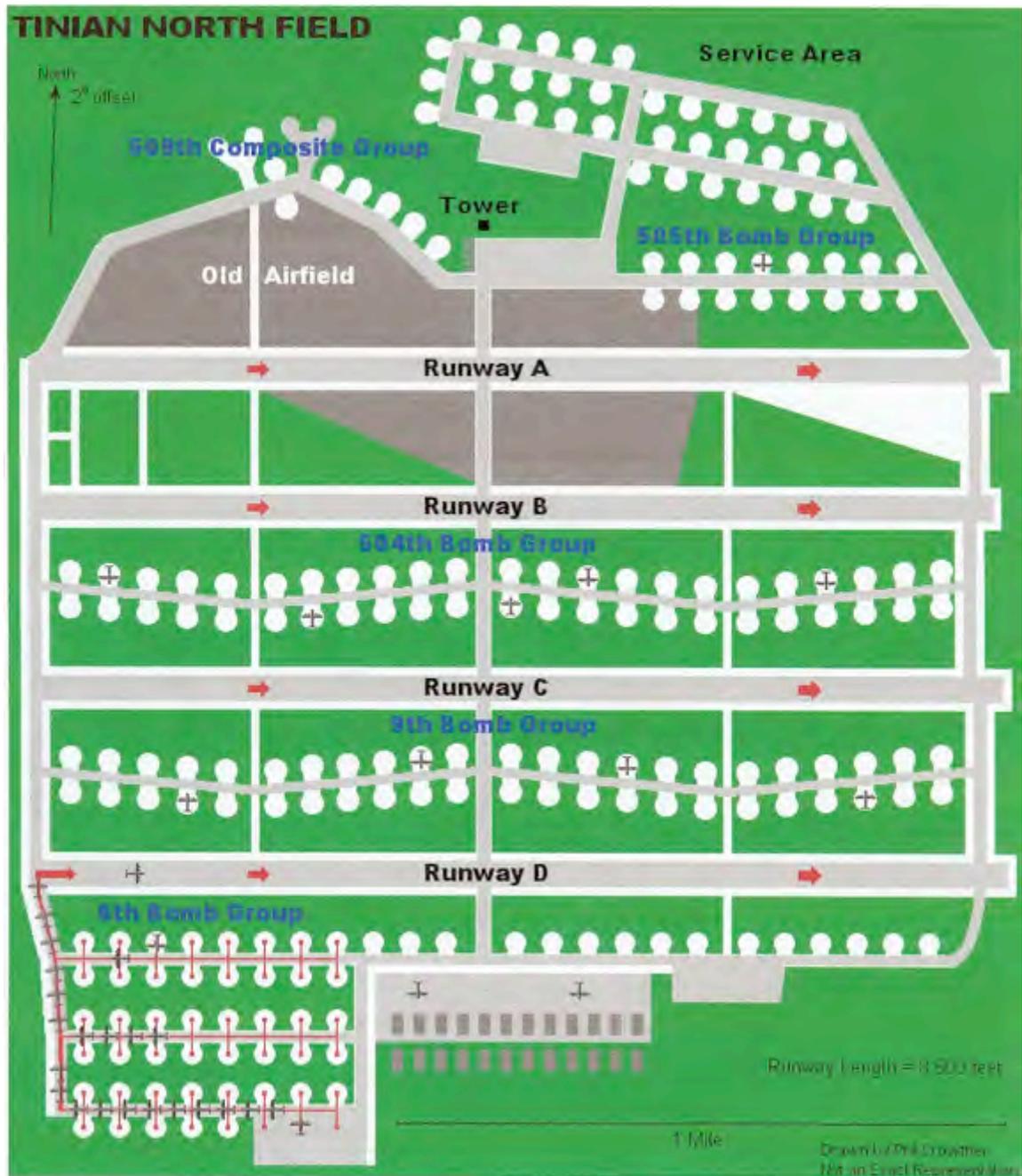
Dad's Air War in the Pacific

In December of 1944 the 313th Bombardment Wing began its move from Grand Island, Nebraska, to Tinian Island in the Marianas. The ground echelon boarded the U.S. Army Transport *Sea Marlin* in San Francisco for a cruise to the Marianas. The air echelon left the States by B-29 in mid-January.

Along with Saipan, its close neighbor only five miles away, Tinian was the most forward island in the Marianas chain—1,500 miles from Tokyo. Immediately after being secured by the Marines in late July 1944, the Navy's Seabees began building Tinian North Field, where the 313th Bomb Wing would be located. Soon after completion of Tinian North Field, a second airfield, Tinian West Field, was constructed.



The Last Look. What you see when you turn to look back at North Field, Tinian, just after take off.



Tinian North Field was, at that time, the largest airport in the world, with four 8,500-foot runways, each about 400-500 feet wide. It had about sixteen miles of concrete, including taxiways and “hardstands.” Each hardstand was a circular parking

area connected by a short taxiway to a runway. In the layout above, the 6th Bomb Group was assigned to the southwest portion of Tinian North.

Even under good conditions every inch of the 8,500 feet of runway was needed to launch a B-29 loaded with crew, fuel, bombs, armaments, and other requirements. Takeoff difficulty was compounded by problems with the B-29's four 2,200 horsepower Wright R-3350 radial engines. Constructed with two nine-cylinder radial blocks, one mounted behind the other, the rear block tended to overheat until the plane was at altitude; the too-frequent result was engine failure as valves melted. A burning Wright R-3350 was a frightful thing: manganese parts burned fiercely and uncontrollably, sometimes setting the wing on fire and not stopping until the engine—or the wing—fell off.

To reduce overheating risk on takeoff a plane would go to its initial position in the lineup on two engines. Once behind the cooling wind from the line of planes ahead, it would start the other two engines. As time passed, new engine designs mitigated engine failures, but they never ceased to be a problem. More planes were lost on takeoff and in-flight engine failure than were lost in combat!

Not only did the low power-to-weight ratio of a loaded B-29 require all 8,500 feet to get airborne, once airborne it could not gain altitude for several miles until fuel burned off. This was called “flying in ground effect.” If an engine failed during that time, the APC would jettison the bombs to lighten the load. If not done in time, the plane, laden with fuel and bombs, would crash and explode.

Runways were oriented so that takeoffs were into the prevailing wind, a standard practice to maximize lift. The runways were also slightly U-shaped: a plane would get

additional acceleration by rolling downhill for the first half, then it would use the added momentum to go slightly uphill so that it would be thrown a bit higher when its wheels left the ground. Every little bit helped!

The B-29 had one additional problem. While the relatively new B-24 had “booster control,” an early form of power steering, the B-29 did not. It was a brute to fly until it was at altitude. Maintaining control on takeoff while in ground effect, or executing evasive actions in combat, often required the strength of both pilots.

Iwo Jima, completely secured by late March of 1945, was about 700 miles north of Tinian, roughly halfway to Tokyo. Until Iwo was taken there was no place for a damaged plane returning from Japan to land until it reached the Marianas. About 2,000 damaged B-29s landed at Iwo Jima because they could not make it back to the Marianas.¹ This probably saved the lives of many aviators: the recovery rate for the crew of a ditched B-29 was only about fifty percent, so if all of these 2,000 planes, each with eleven men aboard, had ditched, as many as 11,000 men and their equipment might have been lost. To partially offset this life-saving advantage, securing Iwo took almost 7,000 American lives, with many more wounded. But the strategic value of Iwo trumped its life-saving value. Securing Iwo was essential to securing Okinawa, from which the invasion of Japan would be launched.

On January 18, 1945, the first 6th Bomb Group B-29 landed at Tinian’s North Field. She was the above-mentioned *Snooky* from the 24th squadron of the 6th Bomb

¹ The first B-29 landed on Iwo on March 4, when fighting near the former Japanese airfield was still active. *Dinah Might*, X TRI 9, a 313th Bomb Wing plane, took Japanese rifle fire, but she was refueled and returned safely to Saipan.

Group, Dad's squadron. *Snooky* was the primary plane for Crew 2412, commanded by Capt. Clark Preston, who had given his infant daughter's nickname to the plane.²

Dad's plane (B-29 42-24887) left the U.S. on January 14, arriving at Tinian on January 21. According to a letter home, the crew informally named her *Fortune's Folly*. The name never stuck because she was promptly transferred to the 73rd Bomb Wing's 499th Bomb Group on Saipan as a replacement for *Wugged Wascal*, lost at sea two weeks earlier.³ The 499th Bomb Group had been in combat for several of the most difficult pre-Iwo months, experiencing significant fleet losses and aircraft war-weariness, so her need for fresh planes trumped the claims of new arrivals. During his first four weeks on Tinian, Dad flew borrowed planes on training missions to orient the crew to the issues of flying over the ocean and to give them experience. These were the cakewalks!

Table 4 lists the missions that Crew 2408 flew. On February 18, 1945, Crew 2408 flew its first combat mission: bombing Moen Island in the Truk atoll, still an active Japanese facility. Their first long-distance mission to Tokyo followed a week later, on February 25.

On March 7, 1945, Crew 2408 finally received its own plane, B-29 42-65347, tail code L TRI 7.⁴ She was officially named *Fortune's Follies*, a play on several themes: a popular book called *Fortune's Folly*, the name "Fortune's Folly" given by detractors to Dad's grandfather's plan to built an overhead rail system in Indianapolis, and the notion that this was all a lot of fun (à la the *Follies Bergère*).

² As noted above, *Snooky* was later renamed *Patty Sue* and Dad's original copilot became her Airplane Commander.

³ 42-24887 was given *Wugged Wascal's* tail marking (V SQUARE 3) in the 499th Bomb Group, 73rd Bomber Wing.

⁴ Mann's book (... *Comprehensive Registry*...) incorrectly designates her as L TRI 20, an error that carried over to the 6th Bomb Group's website. But a letter from Dad to his parents and 6th Bomb Group microfilm records make it clear that she was L TRI 7.

Having a primary plane did not mean that it was yours alone. Planes were assigned to crews by squadron headquarters after a mission-by-mission analysis of the availability of both crews and planes. If a planeless crew was assigned to a mission and your crew was not, your plane might be used by the other crew. So it is impossible to identify all of the planes Dad flew. However, the 6th Bomb Group Association lists two that Dad flew enough to be called his secondary planes: *Shasta*, 44-61549 (CIRC R 02) and *Bataan Avenger*, 44-69753 (CIRC R 08); there were undoubtedly other loaners.⁵

Dad's maiden mission on *Fortune's Follies* was on March 9, 1945. This was the first in the famous "March Blitz" of incendiary raids that represented a major change in strategy. The B-29 was designed for high-altitude precision bombing, but high-level bombing was inaccurate for a variety of reasons: the jet stream, never an issue before the high-flying B-29, made it difficult to factor in wind speed and direction when calculating the parabolic arc of a bomb's path; the new Norden bombsight, though itself a fine instrument, could not see through cloud and smoke, and bombing by radar was not an accurate substitute; and the thermal winds created by urban firestorms buffeted the bombs and sent them off target. There was little serious damage done by B-29s before low-level incendiary raids began in March.

Major General Curtis LeMay had commanded the XX Bomber Command in China. In January 1945, he took over the XXI Bomber Command, replacing Brigadier General Haywood Hansell. LeMay's review of the high-level bombing strategy concluded that it was ineffective. LeMay also realized that the Japanese arms industry

⁵ According to Chester Marshall's "The Search for the Bataan Avenger," *Bataan Avenger* suffered structural damage on a mission to Osaka on March 13 in which she was tossed by a heat thermal and dove straight down, exceeding 350mph before recovery. The wings and fuselage were warped so badly that she literally could not fly straight. She was designated "war weary" and ferried to the U.S. by Marshall in late June. See the "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" on page 32.

was highly decentralized, with much of the parts production distributed among small shops in urban residential areas. This was a major contrast with the German arms industry, where both parts production and assembly were in large, easily identified, factories.⁶

LeMay's response to the inaccuracy of high-level precision bombing and to the decentralization of Japan's armaments industry was a major shift in strategy to low-level incendiary bombing, designed to burn large urban areas and to eliminate parts production: the large assembly plants would be emasculated by starving them for parts rather than by destroying their production capacity. Frosting on the cake would be high civilian casualties that would bring pressure on the Emperor to sue for peace. Of course, B-29 crews were not happy about bombing at 5,000 feet when they could be at 35,000 feet: not only were they more exposed to enemy fighters and anti-aircraft fire, but the thermal drafts from ground fires could be fatal.

The March 9 raid was certainly successful on the loss-of-life side. Sixteen square miles of Tokyo were burned out! The most common count of deaths in that first fire raid is 100,000, with a range of about 85,000 to 125,000. This was more in a single *conventional* air raid than occurred at either Hiroshima or Nagasaki, and it was more than the vigorously vilified fire raid on Dresden, Germany (read Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*). Dad told me that this was this was the first mission on which he *felt* the suffering on the ground: he could smell roasting flesh and the fumes from melting buildings, bridges, and roads. *Fortune's Follies* returned to Tinian covered with soot and carrying the stench.

⁶ Post-war analysis revealed that even in Europe "precision" bombing was inaccurate.

In late January, at the Navy's instigation, General LeMay adopted a second important strategic change. *Operation Starvation* was a plan to mine the waters giving access to Japan's Inland Sea through the only navigable channel, the Shimonoseki Straits between Kyushu and the southwestern tip of Honshu. An estimated 1.25 million tons of ships were sunk or disabled, and transport of goods from Korea and China was forced to go around the long coastline of Honshu to reach Tokyo and other population centers. Other mining missions were to Korean harbors, particularly at Rashin, now in North Korea.⁷

Execution of Operation Starvation was tasked to the 313th Bomb Wing, which flew over fifty mining missions. Dad flew seven of those missions, including the first (to the Shimonoseki Straits on March 27-28) and the last (to Rashin on July 22-23).



This was *Bataan Avenger*, one of Dad's secondary planes

⁷ Korea was called Chosen during its long occupation by Japan.



Fortune's Follies Taking Off, March 1945
 (Note the Low Altitude Achieved at Runway's End)



Fortune's Follies Crew 2408
 March 1945

Standing, from Left: Sgt Robert Y. Marchbanks (T Gun), Sgt Richard J. Brown (L Gun)*,
 S/Sgt Daniel V. Manfredi (R Gun), S/Sgt Lloyd S. Hovland (Radar), S/Sgt Charles M. Allen
 (Radio), S/Sgt Stanley S. Balon (CFC)*, T/Sgt George E. Benyo (Engineer)
 * positions might be reversed

Kneeling, from Left: 2/LT Robert H. Johnson (Nav), 2/LT Floyd E. Keeney (Bomb),
 1/LT Ramon L. Holzclaw (Pilot), Capt. Robert P. Fortune (Air Commander)

On March 29, 1945, Dad was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his role in the March Blitz. The citation for this first of three DFCs reads:

For meritorious achievement while participating in historical missions from bases in the Marianas Islands against the Homeland of Japan between 9 March 1945 and 19 March 1945. During this period the cities of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe were struck with such force and determination that great areas were totally destroyed. Aircraft on each mission attacked these Japanese cities at precedent shattering altitudes, introducing new and successful tactics, with devastating results. Each flight was made without regard to personal safety in the face of ever-present danger from enemy fighters and heavy searchlight-directed flak. These missions were flown over excessively long ranges through weather that was often adverse and necessitated instrument flying and increased navigational problems. There was ever present the possibility of mechanical failure and failure due to enemy action, necessitating subsequent ditching many miles at sea in hostile waters. The rapid succession in which each mission followed the other allowed a minimum time for rest and recuperation. In spite of weariness and fatigue, physical and mental strain, and the hazardous flying conditions, [Captain Fortune] displayed such courage and skill as to reflect great credit on [himself] and the Army Air Forces.

Fortune's Follies had a short life. On April 7, one month after she was assigned to Dad's crew, she was assigned to the crew of *Snooky* for a mission to bomb the Mitsubishi Aircraft Factory at Nagoya.⁸ After a labored takeoff, the number 4 (right outboard) engine lost power and Capt. Preston attempted to jettison the bombs in preparation for ditching. The aft bomb rack released properly but the forward rack failed to release, shifting the center of gravity forward and the nose down. Losing both stability and speed, *Fortune's Follies* plowed into the ocean about two miles off Tinian, exploding on impact. Six crewmen, including Capt. Preston, were killed; remarkably, five survived.

Dad was back on loaners again, though not for long. On April 19 he was assigned another plane, B-29 42-94058, designated CIRC R 07. No official name was recorded, but I have dubbed her *Fortune's Follies II*. Holtzclaw's diary reports that she was a fine plane: speedy, well balanced, and fuel-efficient.

⁸ Strangely, Crew 2408 also flew this mission in a borrowed plane. Why Dad didn't fly it in *Fortune's Follies* is a lucky mystery.

On April 21 Dad flew *Fortune's Follies II* on its first mission under his command (Crew 2408's eleventh combat mission) to bomb the Kanoya East Airfield on Kyushu, Japan's southernmost main island. No planes or lives were lost, though the pilot's diary reports that there was flak damage in the bomb bay doors.⁹

Up to May 22 the 6th Bomb Group had been in combat for about 90 days and had flown forty-two missions, experiencing ten B-29 losses and 28 crew deaths. The next two missions resulted in the worst losses per mission experienced by the 6th Bomb Group: on the May 23-24 and May 25-26 missions to Tokyo three planes and 21 lives were lost; ten crew became POWs.

On May 23, *Fortune's Follies II* and thirty-four other group planes took off on Crew 2408's 17th mission, a major incendiary raid on Tokyo. Four planes aborted because of mechanical failures, and the remaining thirty-one found that the Japanese were unusually aggressive: two planes and eleven lives were lost to fighters and anti-aircraft over Tokyo, and ten men became POWs for the remainder of the war. Two battle-damaged group planes crashed-landed at Iwo: *Uncle Sam's Milk Wagon* and *Fortune's Follies II*. Both were repaired and eventually returned to action: *Uncle Sam's Milk Wagon* was returned to the 6th Bomb Group, but *Fortune's Follies II* was reassigned to another group. Both planes survived the war.

On that May 23-24 mission, *Fortune's Follies II* experienced severe flak and fighter damage that took out the number 4 engine, creating a significant fuel leak. It also destroyed all radio communications except via Morse code, and it destroyed the pilot's

⁹ It was this flak damage that provided the first clue that *Fortune's Follies II* was B-29 42-94058. I came across a post-mission maintenance report indicating that three 6th Group planes had returned from that mission with damage. Of these, only one, 42-94058, had flak damage in the bomb bay doors. See the concluding Note for additional verification.

controls. Fortunately, the airplane commander's (left side) controls were unaffected, so Dad could fly the plane. In addition, the right waist gunner, Staff Sergeant Daniel Manfredi, was seriously wounded with a 20mm cannon shell in his left arm.

This mission and its aftermath are reported in detail in a letter from Dad to his parents.¹⁰ When *Fortune's Follies II* reached Iwo it was nearly out of fuel and the island was socked in by fog. Another 48 planes from that mission were also trying to land at Iwo—some landed, and a few crews (including one from the 6th Bomb Group) either bailed out or ditched their planes. Dad made a harrowing blind landing ending in a ground loop that stopped *Fortune's Follies II* just short of a parked B-29. All Crew 2408 members survived the mission, with S/Sgt. Manfredi going back to the States to live for another 60 years.

Fortune's Follies II was left at Iwo for repairs. After several days of waiting for the fog to clear (it did not), Dad and his crew made a blind takeoff in a borrowed plane that had been repaired after a previous mission. They returned safely to Tinian in spite of an electrical fire that took out the radio and all navigation equipment except the magnetic compass. Like *Fortune's Follies*, *Fortune's Follies II* had been Dad's plane for only one month. Once again, he was without a primary plane.

The May 23-24 mission was by far the most difficult Dad's crew experienced. But the group's next mission, on May 25-26, was executed with even more serious losses: three planes and ten lives. After that, the fight seemed to be out of the Japanese; subsequent losses were limited and sporadic.

¹⁰ The letters are available at www.fortunearchives.com in the family history section.

After the May 23-24 mission, Crew 2408 spent a well-earned vacation in Hawaii. Their first mission after returning was the June 22-23 bombing of the Kawasaki Aircraft Factory at Akashi on Honshu's Inland Sea, near Kobe.

Dad had received his first Air Medal on April 11. The Air Medal was typically awarded for surviving a specific number of combat missions: the first award was for completing five combat missions; the second award (i.e., the first Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, or OLC, for the Air Medal) was given for an additional eight missions.¹¹

On May 27, he was awarded the first of three OLCs to the Air Medal, for service from March 24 to May 7. The citation reads:

For meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight in successful combat missions in the Marianas Islands against Japan. All missions are flown under rapidly changing and often-time adverse weather conditions. The flights were subjected to enemy anti-aircraft fire and fighter opposition. There were constantly present difficult navigational problems, danger of engine failure and consequent ditching many miles at sea. Under prolonged periods of physical and mental strain [he] displayed great courage and skill in the performance of his duties as to reflect great credit on himself and on the Army Air Forces.

On August 30 Dad received an Oak Leaf Cluster for his Distinguished Flying Cross (equivalent to a second DFC) for safely returning his badly damaged plane and a seriously wounded crewman on the May 23-24 mission. The citation read:

For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 23 May 1945 from a base in the Marianas Island. Captain Robert P. Fortune was Air Commander of a B-29 in a low-level incendiary raid against important industrial facilities in Tokyo, Japan. In the target area, the plane was caught in the concentrated beam of almost one hundred searchlights; attacked by six aggressive fighter planes and badly damaged by heavy, accurate anti-aircraft fire. The left waist gunner shot down one Japanese fighter. The right gunner was wounded and the starboard flight cables, all radio and identification equipment and the number four engine was (sic) shot out. Despite this great damage, these

¹¹ The first time a medal was awarded, the physical medal and a ribbon were received. Each additional award of that medal would give the recipient the right to attach a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC) to the medal and ribbon. So, for example, an Air Medal with one OLC would be two awards of the Air Medal.

veterans of many missions against the home islands continued on to the target, effectively dropping their bombs, damaging the objective severely. The radio operator and the navigator administered first aid to the wounded man while Captain Fortune successfully piloted the plane to an emergency landing at Iwo Jima, bringing the B-29 down safely without radio equipment although the ceiling was only fifty feet. The work of this crew contributed materially to the destruction of more than twenty-two square miles of the built-up area of Tokyo. Captain Fortune's skill, teamwork and success in carrying out the attack reflect greatly credit on himself and the Army Air Forces.

On July 1, Crew 2408 was assigned its third primary plane, B-29 42-24890. She was a veteran in the 24th Bomb Squadron, having arrived at about the same time as Dad. Originally tail code L TRI 15, she became CIRC R 15 after April. Her first combat mission was also Dad's first combat mission, and it is possible that he had flown her at the outset as well as at the end of his war. While she had no known name, I have dubbed her *Fortune's Follies III*.¹²

Seven additional missions were flown, without incident, until the last mining mission of the war, to Rashin. Missions to Rashin were the longest flown in the war, more than 4,100 miles round-trip.¹³ The typical route was to fly to Iwo Jima to top off the fuel tanks, then to refuel there on the return trip if necessary.

On July 22, *Fortune's Follies III* and twenty-five other 6th Bomb Group planes flew from Tinian to Iwo Jima, about 50 miles east of the direct route to Rashin. From Dad's detailed report to the Group we know how the mission proceeded. The planes refueled at Iwo, continued on to Rashin, dropped their mines, and returned on a direct line to Iwo Jima to refuel if necessary. As *Fortune's Follies III* approached Iwo,

¹² The serial number was determined from a flight surgeon's report and a plane mission report. According to the mission report, only one plane was lost on that mission: the crew bailed out when the plane ran out of fuel; according to Mann's *Comprehensive Registry*, that plane was 42-24890. The flight surgeon's report provided the link to Dad, stating that he and his crew had bailed out on that mission.

¹³ On July 11 *Flak Alley Sally* was the first 6th Bomb Group plane to fly to Rashin and back to Tinian without refueling.

calculations of fuel consumption and remaining fuel were made to determine whether she needed refueling. The flight engineer determined that she didn't have to stop at Iwo for fuel; she would arrive at Tinian with 1½ hours of fuel remaining. So she did not join the eleven other 6th Bomb Group that landed at Iwo Jima to refuel.

After passing the point of no return between Iwo and Tinian, new calculations of available fuel showed a sharp decline. Either the flight engineer's earlier calculations had been in error, or the "liquidometers" measuring available fuel had failed, or the fuel taken on at Iwo for the outbound flight was less than estimated. The last was a distinct possibility because of the rapid influx of planes to be refueled.

The usual refueling procedure was to pump fuel from the hot storage tanks to intermediate tanks designed to cool the fuel, then to pump the cooled fuel into the plane's fuel tanks. But meeting the tight flight schedule for this mission meant that the twenty-six planes had to be refueled without the normal cooling period. Iwo's high ambient heat had expanded the volume per gallon and the short turnaround time didn't allow the fuel to settle in the plane's tanks so they could be topped off. As a result, the usable fuel on board might have been significantly less than the amount recorded.

To conserve fuel, Dad immediately reduced power and went to a lower altitude. However, as they approached the Marianas the #3 engine (inboard, right side) ran out of fuel. To maintain trim, engine #2 (inboard, left side) was shut down, leaving *Fortune's Follies II* on her two outboard engines. It soon became clear that she couldn't make Tinian. Dad could not ditch the plane because two engines provided insufficient power to control her in a ditching. So the decision was made to bail out. The radioman reported

their position to Saipan, about 20 miles away, then he bailed out of the bomb bays with the rest of the crew while Dad held the plane steady at 5,000 feet. Dad bailed out of the nose-wheel well, diving headfirst into the open air and avoiding antennas and other projections from the fuselage.

All crew landed safely, though some (including Dad) were snarled in their parachute lines after landing. After a few panicked moments being dragged around and down by the sinking chute, he relaxed, extricated himself from the tangled lines, and inflated his one-man life raft. Dad and nine other men were wet but unharmed. George Benyo, the flight engineer, was the only injury: he was found floating unconscious in his Mae West life jacket, having suffered a severe back injury. Crew 2408 drifted in their life rafts for two hours before being rescued by a Navy crash boat sent from Saipan to their location about 15 miles north of Saipan.

Fortune's Follies III was the last 6th Bomb Group plane lost in the war. Of the eighteen 6th Bomb Group planes lost in the war, two—*Fortune's Follies I* and *Fortune's Follies III*—had been Dad's. The third, *Fortune's Follies II*, had been a very near loss.

Serendipity marked this last mission. On July 19, Crew 2408's pilot had been promoted to Airplane Commander of *Patty Sue* nee *Snooky*. Holtzclaw had transferred the day before *Fortune's Follies III* took off for Rashin, avoiding the bailout.

On July 19, just four nights earlier another, more famous, loss occurred: *Sharon Linn*, a 24th Bomb Squadron plane commanded by Capt. Gordon "Porky" Jordan, was shot down over Tokyo. An interesting book titled *Field of Spears* records the *Sharon Linn's* loss and the experience of the surviving crew at the hands of Japanese civilians

and military. It details, among other things, the highly stressed behavior of aviators who faced death so frequently.



“Porky” Jordan and “Pete” Fortune

July 1945

Fortune’s Follies III was the last 6th Bomb Group plane lost in the war. Of the eighteen 6th Bomb Group planes lost in the war, two—*Fortune’s Follies I* and *Fortune’s Follies III*—had been Dad’s. The third, *Fortune’s Follies II*, had been a very near loss. Serendipity marked this last mission. On July 19, Crew 2408’s pilot had been promoted to Airplane Commander of *Patty Sue* nee *Snooky*. Holtzclaw had transferred the day before *Fortune’s Follies III* took off for Rashin, avoiding the bailout.

Dad, with the luck of the Irish, had survived 27 missions. But after the loss of *Fortune’s Follies III*, his nerves were shot. He had lost three planes, two in an eight-week period. True, the first loss was while the plane was on loan to another crew, and the

second was a harrowing experience but not a total loss. But those omens of things to come must have taken a toll: eventually, the grim reaper would score.

The flight surgeon routinely examined all crewmen after a bailout, ditching, or crash landing. His report noted that Dad showed signs of “severe operational fatigue,” including severe tremors. Recognizing that Dad was “war weary,” a term typically used for planes being retired from service, the flight surgeon recommended that Dad be “excused from flying and rotated to the Zone of the Interior.” His combat time was over.

In his six months of combat flying Dad earned nine combat medals: the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters (equivalent to three DFCs), the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters (equivalent to four Air Medals), and the Presidential Unit Citation with one Oak Leaf Cluster (equivalent to two Presidential Unit Citations). He also earned the WWII Victory Medal and three “theater” medals: the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four battle stars (each star representing a different campaign theater in the Pacific war); the American Campaign Medal with one battle star (for wartime service within the U.S. followed by assignment in a combat theater; the battle star was for Air Combat); and the American Defense Medal (for Army service after September 8, 1939—the onset of European hostilities—but before December 7, 1941).

The combat medals made him among the most decorated airmen in the 6th Bomb Group. A few had won higher awards (several Silver Stars and one Legion of Merit) but few had won as many DFCs. According to 6th Bomb Group records, by August 31 there had been 352 first DFCs awarded, but only 21 aviators received a second Oak Leaf

Cluster to the DFC, that is, only about six percent of first-time DFC winners received a second DFC during the war months!¹⁴ And Dad received three.

On August 14, Dad and Crew 2408 took off in *Trigger Mortis* (42-93911) for California's Mather Air Force Base. From California, Crew 2408 flew *Trigger Mortis* to Biloxi, Mississippi, where they disbanded to report for separation at their respective district centers. At that time, Crew 2408 consisted of eight original members and three replacements (see Table 5): Capt. Joseph Banis replaced 1st Lt. Ramon Holtzclaw as co-pilot; 1st Lt. Lee Sherrill replaced T/Sgt. George Benyo as flight engineer; and S/Sgt. Donald Goetz replaced S/Sgt. Daniel Manfredi as right gunner.¹⁵



Joseph Banis
Circa Korean War

¹⁴ There was a lag of several months between the recommendation for an award and the actual award. Dad's second OLC to the DFC and his third OLC to the Air Medal were awarded after the war's end on the basis of recommendations made during the war. The citations are not available.

¹⁵ Assigned to the 6th Bomb Group for the duration of the war, 42-93911 was L TRI 18/CIRC R 18. After through seasoning in combat, she had been transferred to the 358th Air Service Group to ferry parts and equipment.

On the day Dad departed Tinian, the 6th Bomb Group sent forty-eight planes to bomb the Marifu Railroad Yards at Iwakuni—this was the last B-29 combat mission of World War II. Among those planes was *Patty Sue* nee *Snooky* (42-24825, CIRC R 14) flown by Crew 2408's original pilot, Ramon L. Holtzclaw (see Table 3). This is the final irony: *Snooky*, the first B-29 to land on Tinian, had survived the war, but her original crew had been lost; only of Dad's three planes (*Fortune's Follies II*) survived the war, but all his crew were safe.

Dad was very proud of that!

Dad arrived in the States on August 18, 1945. He was sent to Camp Atterbury near Edinburgh, Indiana, south of Indianapolis, where he mustered out on September 23, 1945; he had just turned 26. In less than a year he had faced difficult circumstances with courage and skill, though not without psychological effects.



Trigger Mortis (42-93911) L TRI 18
(The B-29 that Crew 2408 ferried back to the States)



**The Japanese Surrender,
U.S.S. Missouri, September 2, 1945**



Medals

- M1: Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLCs)
- M2: Air Medal (3 OLCs)
- M3: American Defense
- M4: American Campaign (1 Star)
- M5: Asiatic-Pacific Campaign (4 Stars)
- M6: WWII Victory

Insignia and Pins

- I1: Pilot's Wings
- I2: Officer's Collar Insignia
- I3: Captain's Rank Insignia
- P1: Caterpillar Club Pin
- P2: Advanced Training Pin (Maxwell-Gunter Field)

Ribbons

Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC)

Air Medal (3 OLC)	Presidential Unit Citation (1 OLC)	American Defense
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American Campaign (1 Battle Star)	Asiatic-Pacific Campaign (4 Battle Stars)	WWII Victory
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The Post-War Slough of Despond¹⁶

The air war in the Pacific was a dangerous grand adventure. But those who lived through it physically unscathed—as did the vast majority of aviators and ground crew—often returned home with deep psychological scars to face a civilian world with little appreciation of psychiatric matters (especially of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and filled with people who wanted to set the war, and its victims, behind them. *Unbroken*, a book about one such aviator, the Olympic runner Louis Zamperini, speaks for many: seventy-three days on a life raft in the Pacific, and months in a POW camp known for its cruelty, left deep scars and chronic alcoholism. But even those were eventually overcome.

The combat experience was terror-filled, both in its anticipation and its execution. Living through it was exhilarating but, at the same time, the combat veteran was riddled with survivor's guilt and saddened by the deeply felt loss of friends and colleagues. The return to the States was welcomed, but it was filled with daily contact with civilians who could not understand the emotional baggage carried by the combat veteran. And the adrenal high of combat, documented in Sebastian Junger's book *War*, could never be experienced again.

¹⁶ Paul Bunyon's 1678 classic *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a morality tale in which the character Christian falls into the "slough [pronounced 'slouw' or 'sloo'] of despond," a swamp of human misery filled with guilt, doubt, fear, and desperation.

Dad was one of those people. For many years after the war he found his solace at bars, where other veterans-in-pain could be found in abundance. Stories could be told—and understood. But then they went home...

For Dad, home was not happy. He had a wife and two children, but he couldn't stop drinking, and he couldn't keep a job. When the Korean War began in 1950, he applied to be reappointed to the Air Force, a separate military branch since 1947. The doctor for his physical examination reported that, "This man uses alcohol in excess and has done so since the end of World War II." The physician also reported that Dad had severe liver damage and indications of kidney damage. His application was denied.

It would be seven more years before he would "straighten up and fly right," as the old Army Air Corps dictum states. After a divorce in 1953, he moved to San Angelo, Texas, where he had undergone Basic Flight Training. While there he met a Beaumont divorcee whom he married in 1954. The newly-weds returned to Indianapolis. Dad continued drinking. When I moved back to Indianapolis in 1956 to live with him, he was rarely sober.

In 1957, in his late thirties, Dad started going to Alcoholics Anonymous, putting himself on the right glide path. After a brief period of setbacks he never drank again. He became immersed in AA's program, helping others to achieve sobriety, and he developed a deep religious faith. In the early 1960s he and a partner, René Defourneaux, a former OSS agent and military intelligence officer, started Mid-America International Corporation, a successful export agent for U.S.-produced equipment.¹⁷

¹⁷ René Defourneaux was a Frenchman who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1939. When the war started he became an OSS agent serving in France and Indo-China. After 20 years in the Army's Intelligence Service, René retired and moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. René's book, *The Winking Fox*, is a good read about his OSS years, including his role in training Ho Chi Minh in guerilla warfare. René died in 2010.

Dad had reached the light at the end of a very long tunnel. Unfortunately, he did not spend a full lifespan in that light. Dad died of a heart attack on September 30, 1973; he had just turned 54. But those last 15 years were good and productive years!

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Epilogue

The activities and events described here occurred over sixty-five years ago, when I was just two years old. Had Dad lived, he would now be 92 years old. Memories of that war are fading all too quickly. Very few of those who served in the 6th Bombardment Group are now alive: only one or two members of Crew 2408 survive at this date (see Table 6), and the 6th Bomb Group Association is now populated by the sons and grandsons of the 6th Bomb Group members.¹⁸

It seems odd to have gotten so wrapped up in the details of such long-ago events. But writing this brief history—and becoming so immersed in the minutiae of that time—has been a wonderful experience. It has helped me to better understand and appreciate a man who was front and center in my life, but who was absent for most of my childhood and was always at a great distance. Learning what he and his peers had been through has helped me to understand the psychological baggage that he and all warriors of that time carried. And the more I've learned, the prouder I am of what he and his generation did in those difficult times, times that few of us can appreciate or understand in these days of ease and comfort, when the worst thing that happens to many of us is a sunburn.

When I was young I thought that I was *tabula rosa*, a clean slate born into the world with no history and a long future in which to write my story: all the words would be mine alone! What I now realize is that at birth we are the result of a long line of ancestors, each influencing the next generations in powerful but unseen and always

¹⁸ The only 6th Bomb Group member with whom I have communicated is Captain Harry George, pilot for *Ann Garry III* and *Ann Garry IV*, and airplane commander for *Ann Garry V*. Harry, the original 6th Bomb Group historian, was recently interviewed on a PBS documentary about the war in the Pacific.

unappreciated ways. While we are each new at birth, what makes us into what we will become is very old! I believe that by better understanding my father, I can better understand myself. No reader could share that experience with me—it is mine alone. But I can share my regard for those who gave so much with those who read this, and perhaps they will see a bit of their own story.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war, and it began a long and unresolved debate about the morality of that end. The war's end would not have come without the sacrifices of members of the 6th Bombardment Group, and of millions of others who struggled to end what they had not started. The Japanese military, infused with the Samurai code of Bushido, were committed to armed resistance of an invasion: even after the Hiroshima bomb, a militant wing attempted a coup to prevent the Emperor's surrender. By avoiding the need for an invasion, with its consequent loss of hundreds of thousands of American and Japanese lives, the atomic bomb was a lifesaver in the short term.¹⁹ And, let's remember, the use of such a formidable weapon as the atomic bomb has never been repeated; there has been no Third World War. So the Bomb might have saved millions of lives in the long term.

Hopefully, all of those efforts, and the use of a horrendous weapon, not only re-established freedom in most of the world, but also set a foundation for continued peace with where small battles replace giant conflicts.

Still, we should remember the 6th Bomb Groups' motto:

Parati Defendere – (Be) Ready to Defend

¹⁹ Wilson Miscambles' *A Controversial Decision* is an excellent description of the facts available to Truman and of the historical context for the use of the atomic bomb.

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgUkJfM5JUI An impressive video of B-29s at Saipan and Tinian with the song "Coming in on A Wing and a Prayer" as background. It shows a 6th BG B-29 ditching just off of Tinian. The website www.philcrowther.com/6BG reports (incorrectly) that Capt. Robert P. Fortune ditched this B-29. I believe it was Captain Moulton's plane ditching at Iwo on May 26, 1945 because fog closed the air base down.

www.usaaf.net/digest/operations.htm Information from the USAAF Statistical Digest: World War II.

www.econseminars.com/PF A website with this text and other material related to the 6th Bomb Group and Robert P. Fortune's wartime experiences

Table 1

6th Bombardment Group

B-29 Roster

Serial Number	Tail Code		Plane Name	Comments
	May-Aug	Jan-Apr		
42-24759	R01	L01	<i>Blind Date/Ladies Delight</i>	Crash Tokyo 5/23/45 (0KIA)
42-63535	R01	L02	<i>Spirit of Sammy</i>	
44-61549	R02		<i>Shasta</i> ²⁰	
44-69838		L03	-----	Salvaged (0KIA)
42-93910		L03	-----	Trans from 444BG
42-24870	R03		-----	Lost Tokyo 5/23/45 (11KIA)
44-70116	R03		<i>Sharon Linn</i>	Lost Tokyo 7/19/45 (4KIA)
42-24874	R04	L04	<i>El Pajaro de la Guerre</i>	
42-24885	R05	L05	<i>Big Joe</i>	
42-24830	R06	L06	<i>Irish Lullaby</i>	
42-65347	--	L07	<i>Fortune's Follies</i>	Crashed on Takeoff 4/7/45 (6KIA)
42-94058	R07		<i>Fortune's Follies II</i> ²¹	Crash Land Iwo 5/24/45, Transferred
44-61784	R07		<i>Incendiary Journey</i>	
44-69753	R08	L08	<i>Bataan Avenger</i>	War Weary-sent to States late June
42-93951	R08		<i>Lucky Leven</i>	
44-69864	R09	L09	-----	
42-93906	R10	L10	<i>Uncle Sam's Milk Wagon</i>	Crash Land Iwo 5/24/45, repaired (1KIA)
44-61688	R10		<i>Anonymous IV</i>	
42-65281	R11	L11	<i>Miss America '62</i>	On Display
42-24889		L12	-----	Crash Tinian 4/22/45, Destroyed (0KIA)
44-94063	R12		<i>The Wolf Pack</i>	
42-24836	R13	L13	<i>Jake's Jernt/Porcupine</i>	
42-24825	R14	L14	<i>Patty Sue (formerly Snooky)</i>	
42-24890	R15	L15	<i>Fortune's Follies III</i> ²⁶	Ditched Saipan 7/23/45 (0KIA)
44-87734	R15			Trans from 58BW; replaced 42-24890
44-69865	R16	L16	<i>Tinny Ann</i>	
42-93911	R18	L18	<i>358th ASG (formerly Trigger Mortis)</i>	Crash Iwo 3/27/4, repaired
42-63518	R19	L19	-----	
42-65229		L26	<i>Do It Again</i>	
44-70150	R26		<i>Tokyo Trolley II</i>	
42-63553		L27	<i>Old Faithful</i>	Crash on Takeoff 3/9/45 (0KIA)
42-63552	R27	L27	<i>Lucky Strike</i>	
42-63558	R28	L28	<i>Tokyo Trolley</i>	Lost Tokyo 5/25/45 (10KIA)
42-69736	R29	L29	<i>Look Homeward Angel</i>	On Display
42-24868	R30	L07	<i>Son of a B-29/Rip Van Winkle</i>	Trans from 24 th to 39 th as Rip Van Winkle
42-93898	R31	L21	<i>Lady Jean</i>	Trans to 421 st BS
44-69667	R32	L22	<i>Snugglebunny</i>	Crew trans to 504thBG 6/16/45
44-94063	R32	L12	<i>The Wolf Pack</i>	
44-69672	R33	L23	<i>Reamatroid</i>	Trans to 504thBG
42-24916		L34	<i>The Peacemaker</i>	Crash Japan 3/27/45 (0KIA)
42-93901	R34	L24	<i>Big Fat Mama/Patricia Lynn</i>	

²⁰ The 6th BG Website says *Shasta* was 42-87734, and had TC#15; this is not true. It also says that she ditched; I can find no record of *Shasta* ditching, and Mann reports that she survived the war.

²¹ These are not official names; both names were given by the author for easy reference.

Table 1
(continued)

Serial Number	Tail Code		Plane Name	Comments
	May-Aug	Jan-Apr		
42-24901	R35	L25	<i>Cultured Vulture</i>	
42-24884	R36	L16	<i>Grider Gal</i>	
42-63514	R37	L17	<i>Ann Garry III</i>	Ditched Iwo 5/2 (0KIA)
44-87650	R37		<i>Ann Garry V</i>	
44-61686	R38		<i>Forever Amber II</i>	
44-69744	R39	L19	<i>Trigger Mortis II (formerly Here's Lucky)</i>	<i>Here's Lucky</i> Crew first to 35
44-69675		L40	<i>Bad Penny</i>	Crashed 3/27/45 (11KIA)
42-94042	R40		<i>Maya's Dragon</i>	
44-69839	R41		<i>Forever Amber</i>	Crash Iwo, salvaged (2KIA)
44-69757	R42		<i>Speagle Eagle</i>	
44-94008		L49	-----	
42-24866	R51	L31	<i>Earthquake McGoon</i>	
42-93902		L32	<i>Grand Slam</i>	Crash on Takeoff 5/10 (0KIA)
44-69831	R52	L32	-----	
42-24878	R53	L33	<i>Hell's Belle/Flak Alley Sally</i>	
44-69847	R54	L34	<i>Battlin' Betty</i>	
42-93939	R55	L35	<i>Little Giant</i>	Crashed 7/9/45 (12KIA)
42-24872	R56	L36	<i>Jolly Roger</i>	
42-24776	R57	L37	<i>White Mistress</i>	Crashed on Takeoff, repaired
44-70012	R58		-----	Trans from 19thBG
44-70069	R59		<i>Dearly Beloved: The Ramp Tramp</i>	
44-69840	R60	L40	<i>Bad Penny II</i>	Crash Land 5/16/45, salvaged
44-70124	R60		<i>Tojo's Nightmare</i>	
42-24783	R61	L41	<i>Connecticut Yankee/Wun Wing Lo</i> ²²	Crash Land, repaired, renamed
42-24880	R62	L42	<i>Gravel Gertie</i>	
42-93887	R63	L43	<i>Lady Annabelle</i>	
42-63551	R64	L44	<i>Banana Boat</i>	
44-69855	R65	L45	<i>Little Jeff</i>	
44-69825	R66	L46	-----	Ditched Iwo 5/26/45 (0KIA)
42-63451 ²³		L53	-----	Crashed wing broke off 6/5/45
44-69980	R67		<i>Connecticut Yankee II</i>	
42-24723 ²⁴	R97	L38/53	-----	Trans to or from 444BG
42-24753 ²⁵		L61	-----	
42-65327	R95	L20	-----	Tran to 444BG, Lost 5/26/45
42-xxx91		L10	-----	
xx-x7697	R99		-----	No such Victor in Mann
42-24842			-----	Lost at Sea 2/12/45 (11KIA)

Source: 6th Bomb Group Microfilm Records, Reels B0059 and B0060, Maintenance Reports and Mission Records; 6th Bomb Group Website. Robert Mann, *The B-29 Superfortress: A Comprehensive Registry...*

²² It is not certain that *Wun Wing Lo* was originally *Connecticut Yankee*. WWL replaced CTY after CTY had a crash landing with wing damage, and WWL had a new wing when it was received and named. Also WWL and CTY had the same group number (61).

²³ A malfunction report refers to 53V34x1 (x is unreadable). The only SN in Mann that fits is 42-63451.

²⁴ The last mission board, dated August 14, shows V4723 as R97. 42-24723 is the only SN in Mann that fits.

²⁵ A malfunction report in early April refers to 61V4753. 42-24753 is the only SN in Mann that fits. Mann assigns this plane to the 499th BG and says it ditched 3/11/45.

Table 2

6th Bombardment Group B-29s and Crewmen Lost to Enemy Action or Accident

	APC	SN	Name	Date of Loss	
				EA	Accident
1	Casaurang (11)	42-24824	----		02/12/45 (DITCH)
2	Grounds	42-24916	<i>The Peacemaker</i>	03/27/45	
3	Steel	42-63553	<i>Old Faithful</i>		03/09/45 (OTO)
4	Steel (11)	42-69657	<i>Bad Penny</i>	03/27/45	
5	Preston (6)	42-65347	<i>Fortune's Follies</i>		04/07/45 (OTO)
6	Unknown	44-69838	----		04/14/45 (SAL)
7	Mutch	44-24889	----		04/22/45 (OTO)
8	Neal	42-93902	<i>Grand Slam</i>		05/10/45 (OTO)
9	Reed	44-69840	<i>Bad Penny II</i>		05/16/45 (OLA)
10	Boynton	42-24759	<i>Blind Date/Ladies Delight</i>	05/23/45	
11	Snyder (11)	42-24870	----	05/23/45	
12	Fox (10)	42-63558	<i>Tokyo Trolley</i>	05/26/45	
13	Clay	42-62514	<i>Ann Garry III</i>		05/26/45 (DITCH)
14	Moulton	44-69825	----		05/26/45 (DITCH)
15	Catts (2)	44-69839	<i>Forever Amber</i>		06/05/45 (SAL)
16	Schmid (12)	42-93939	<i>Little Giant</i>	07/09/45	
17	Jordan (4)	44-70116	<i>Sharon Linn</i>	07/19/45	
18	Fortune	42-24890	<i>Fortune's Follies III</i>		07/22/45 (DITCH)
*	Park (1)	42-93906	<i>Uncle Sam's Milk Wagon</i>	*	*
	Total (68)			7	11

Source: 6th BG B-29 Inventory constructed by the author (Available in an EXCEL spreadsheet)

Notes: Enemy action (EA) is defined as loss over target area or directly following EA

Accident is defined as any other cause (crash on takeoff/landing, ditching, etc.)

APC in bold face indicates at least one death (number of deaths is in parentheses)

* = Plane survived

Codes:

OTO = Accident on Takeoff

OLA = Accident on Landing

DITCH = Plane Ditched

SAL = Salvaged (damaged beyond repair, parts used)

Table 3

**6th BG MISSION BOARD - AUGUST 14, 1945
Last Mission of War-Marifu Railroad Yards, Iwakuni**

24th Bomb Squadron

VICTOR #	APC	NAME
3535	Alger	SPIRIT OF SAMMY
1549	Marino	SHASTA
4874	Litchfield	EL PAJARO
4885	Bryant	BIG JOE
1784	Bessenoff	INCENDIARY JOURNEY
1635	Jones	BATAAN AVENGER
9864	Breadoff?	-unnamed- (CIRC R 09)
1688	Howett	ANONYMOUS IV
5281	Henshaw	MISS AMERICA '62
4063	Guay	THE WOLF PACK
1558	Hurd	JAKE'S JERNT/PORCUPINE
4825	Holtzclaw	PATTY SUE
7734	Brant	ZZZUNNAMED
9865	Berry	TINNY ANN
4836	Wilson	-unnamed- (CIRC R 17)
1905	Rogers	LOVELY LOIS

39th Bomb Squadron

VICTOR #	APC	NAME
0150	Treeman	TOKYO TROLLEY II
3552	Lemme	LUCKY STRIKE
9736	-no entry-	LOOK HOMEWARD ANGLE
4868	Smith	RIP VAN WINKLE
3898	Cunningham	LADY JEAN
9667	Jennings	SNUGGLEBUNNY
9672	Joslin	REAMATROID
3901	Disosway	BIG FAT MAMMA/PATRICIA LYNN
4901	Crumpton	CULTURED VULTURE
4884	Besore	GRIDER GAL
7650	George	ANNE GARRY V
1686	Sharp	FOREVER AMBER II
9744	Frank	TRIGGER MORTIS II
4042	Catts	MAYA'S DRAGON
1836	Russell	-unnamed-
9757	Olive	SPEAGLE EAGLE

40th Bomb Squadron

VICTOR #	APC	NAME
4866	Patterson	EARTHQUAKE MCGOON
9831	Triplett	-unnamed-
4878	Vincent	FLAK ALLEY SALLY/HELL'S BELLE
9847	Comerford	BATTLIN' BETTY
1803	Bunting	RATTLE N' ROLL
4872	Russow	JOLLY ROGER (#1)
4776	Reed	WHITE MISTRESS
0006	Scurria	VIRGIN STURGEON ?
0069	Kubicek	DEARLY BELOVED: RAMP TRAMP
0124	Christensen	TOJO'S NIGHTMARE
4783	Harp	CONNECTICUT YANKEE
4880	Semonian	GRAVEL GERTIE
3887	-no entry-	LADY ANNABELLE
3551	Clay	BANANA BOAT (#1)
9855	Christie	LITTLE JEFF
9980	Birerkan	CONNECTICUT YANKEE II

Table 4

Crew 2408 Combat Missions
Robert P. Fortune, Air Commander

Mission	Date	Target	6th BG Planes Aloft	6th BG Planes Bombing	6th BG Planes Lost
1	Feb 18	Truk-Moen Airfield	30	30	0
2	Feb 25	Tokyo Urban Area	21	21	0
3	Mar 09	Tokyo Urban Area-Incendiary	32	32	0
4	Mar 11	Nagoya Urban Area-Incendiary	32	32	0
5	Mar 16	Kobe Urban Area-Incendiary	34	33	0
6	Mar 18	Nagoya Urban Area-Incendiary	34	32	0
7	Mar 27	Inland Sea (Yawata Area)-Mining	30	30	0
8	Apr 03	Koizumi-Nakajima Aircraft Factory	19	19	0
9	Apr 07	Nagoya-Mitsubishi Aircraft Co.	30	30	1 ^
10	Apr 13	Tokyo Arsenal Area	29	29	0
11	Apr 21	Kanoya East Airfield	23	22	0
12	Apr 27	Miyakonajo Airfield	6	6	0
13	May 07	Kanoya, Ibuski Airfield	11	10	0
14	May 11	Nittigahara Airfield	11	5	0
15	May 14	Nagoya Urban Area	32	25	0
16	May 16	Nagoya Urban Area	33	33	0
17	May 23	Tokyo Urban Area-Incendiary	35	31	2 ^
18	Jun 22	Akashi-Kawasaki Aircraft Co.	29	29	0
19	Jun 28	Moji Urban Area	30	30	0
20	Jul 01	Ube Urban Area	39	35	0
21	Jul 03	Himeji Urban Area	35	35	0
22	Jul 09	Inland Se (Yawata Area)-Mining	30	30	1 ^
23	Jul 11	Maizuru-Mining	31	31	0
24	Jul 13	Masan, (South) Korea-Mining	28	28	0
25	Jul 17	Nanao-Mining	16	16	0
26	Jul 19	Miazu-Mining	45	45	1 ^
27	Jul 22	Rashin, Korea-Mining	30	26	1 ^
Total			755	725	6

Note: Twelve additional 6th BG Planes were lost during the war on missions not flown by Crew 2408
 Crew 2408 also aborted on three missions (not included above)

Legend:

Gray shading indicates data not available in Mann. (Planes bombing is set equal to planes aloft)

^ All Planes lost on Missions Flown by 2408 are:

Apr 07: FORTUNE'S FOLLIES 42-65347 (L TRI 07) -- Crashed on Takeoff, Preston Crew 6KIA

May 23: NO NAME 42-24870 (CIRC R 17) -- Shot Down-Snyder Crew 11KIA

BLIND DATE/LADIE'S DELIGHT 42-24759 (CIRC R 01) -- Boynton Crew 11POW

July 09: LITTLE GIANT 42-93939 (CIRC R 55) -- Schmid Crew 12KIA

July 19: SHARON LINN 44-70116 (CIRC R 03) -- Jordan Crew 4KIA/7POW

July 23: FORTUNE'S FOLLIES III (CIRC R 18) 42- 24890 Ditched, Fortune Crew

Sources

6th BG Planes Up, Bombing: Pirate's Log, and Mann, Robert A. "A Comprehensive Registry..."

6th BG Planes Lost: "Pirate's Log" and W.E. Cooper notes dated 11/1/1997

Missions Flown by 2408: R.L. Holtzclaw Diary, R.P. Fortune Mission List, and *The Pirate's Log*

Table 5

Crew 2408 Roster On Arrival At and Departure From Tinian

Position	On Arrival Jan 21, 1945	On Departure August 14, 1945
Commander	Capt. Robert P. Fortune	Capt. Robert P. Fortune
Pilot	1 st Lt. Ramon L. Holtzclaw ¹	Capt. Joseph C. Banis
Navigator	1 st Lt. Robert H. Johnson	1 st Lt. Robert H. Johnson
Bombardier	1 st Lt. Floyd E. Keeney	1 st Lt. Floyd E. Keeney
Radio	S/Sgt. Charles M. Allen	S/Sgt. Charles M. Allen
Radar	S/Sgt. Lloyd S. Hovland	S/Sgt. Lloyd S. Hovland
Flight Engineer	T/Sgt George E. Benyo ²	1 st Lt. Lynn C. Sherrill
CFC	T/Sgt. Stanley S. Balon	T/Sgt. Stanley S. Balon
Right Gun	S/Sgt. Daniel L. Manfredi ³	S/Sgt. Donald F. Goetz
Left Gun	S/Sgt. Richard J. Brown	S/Sgt. Richard J. Brown
Tail Gun	S/Sgt. Robert Y. Marchbanks	S/Sgt. Robert Y. Marchbanks

Crew marked in yellow were replaced during the interval

* The Plane Ferried Back to States was 42-93911 (*Trigger Mortis*)

¹ Transferred to Crew 2412 on July 19 as Aircraft Commander. Replaced by Capt. Joseph C. Banis

² Suffered a Severe back injury on Bailing Out, July 23. Hospitalized. Replaced after this last Crew 2408 combat mission by 1st Lt. Lynn C. Sherill

³ Seriously Wounded May 24. Returned to States. Replaced in May by Donald F. Goetz from crew 2411.

Table 6

Crew 2408: Vital Statistics

Position	Name	Dates	States*
Commander	Capt. Robert P. Fortune	1919 – 1973	IN / IN
Pilot	1 st Lt. Ramon L. Holzclaw	1919 – 1997	CA / CA
Pilot (R - July 20)	Capt. Joseph C. Banis	1920 – 2010	IL / CA
Navigator	1 st Lt. Robert H. Johnson	1921 –	NY / ----
Bombardier	1 st Lt. Floyd E. Keeney	1925 – 2012	TX / TX
Radio Operator	S/Sgt. Charles M. Allen		
Radar Operator	S/Sgt. Lloyd S. Hovland	1924 – 1998	IA / IA
Engineer	T/Sgt. George E. Benyo	1919 – 1993	PA / WI
Engineer (R - July 23)	1 st Lt. Lynn C. Sherrill	1917 – 2001	CA / CA
CFC Gun	T/Sgt. Stanley S. Balon	1918 – 2007	CT / CT
Right Gun	S/Sgt. Daniel V. Manfredi	1920 – 2005	CT / CT
Right Gun (R – Mar 25)	S/Sgt. Donald F. Goetz	1925 – 2009	IL / CA
Left Gun	S/Sgt. Richard J. Brown	1924 – 2008	MA / MA
Tail Gun	S/Sgt. Robert Y. Marchbanks	1923 – 2002	SC / SC

(R) indicates crewman was a replacement and the approximate date of replacement

* States are state of enlistment / state of death or current residence

Note

Finding Dad's B-29s

A great deal of time was spent tracking down the planes Dad flew, and their histories. Here are the results.

Fortune's Folly (42-24887)

Air Corps records show that this was the B-29 flown by Crew 2408 from the States to Tinian, arriving January 21, 1945. The crew roster is shown in Table 5. In a letter Dad wrote to his parents he says that the crew had named her *Fortune's Folly*. But this name was never recorded, and the plane was transferred to a group on Saipan almost immediately on arrival. No name is recorded for that plane so I have attached the name informally given by Crew 2408.

Fortune's Follies (42-65347)

The first *Fortune's Follies* is well documented as 42-65347. Its assignment to Crew 2408 on March 7 is reported in Holtzclaw's diary, and the Missing Air Crew Report shows that it was the plane that crashed and exploded on takeoff on April 7, 1945, under the command of Captain Preston.

Fortune's Follies II (42-94058)

The second plane, which I call *Fortune's Follies II*, was discovered by accident. That Crew 2408 received it on April 19, 1945, and that they flew their first mission on it on April 21-22, returning with flak damage on the bomb bay doors, was revealed in the pilot's diary.

Tom Culbert (see Preface) found a 6th Bomb Group damage report for the April 21-22 mission: three planes had experienced minor damage, and only one, Victor 4058, had flak damage in the bomb bay doors. The extensive inventory of 6th BG planes that I developed gives two 6th Bomb Group planes with Victor 4058. The AAF did not receive one until July, well after the April 21-22 mission, so it could be excluded. The AAF received the other, 42-94058, on February 21, 1945; this was the only plane to fit the timing.

To clinch the case, I found a damage report for the May 23-24 mission. It states that "V4058 (Fortune)" was damaged on landing at Iwo and had been left for repairs—exactly the mission outcome Dad had reported. That passes for near certainty in this game, and I am highly confident that plane number two has been identified.

B-29 42-94058 was repaired but Holtzclaw's diary says that the crew's third plane was not received until July 1. In the next section we see that the plane received on July 1 was not 42-94058. Thus, *Fortune's Follies II* was transferred to another group, or to another crew in the 6th Bomb Group.

Fortune's Follies III (42-24890)

Holtzclaw's diary reports that Dad's crew was assigned a third plane on July 1, 1945. Dad had told me that he had bailed out from a plane and had ditched a plane, but I did not know whether these were a single incident or were separate events.

Robert Mann's second book on B-29 identification (...*Chronology: 1934-1960*) lists a 6th Bomb Group B-29, 42-24890, as "ditched 7/20, target unknown" (the correct date was 7/23; dates in his book are often off by a few days). The 20th AAF mission report lists one B-29 lost on a July 22-23 mission when it ditched 15 miles north of Saipan after it ran out of fuel and the crew bailed out. Was this *Fortune's Follies III*? If so, it would fit with his story of a bailout and ditching, and it would confirm that the bailout and ditching were a single event.

Once again, Tom Culbert helped to answer the question. Among the papers he found was a medical report on Dad's condition after the July 22-23 mission. The report says that Dad and his crew had bailed out on July 23 near Saipan; that was exactly the description of the B-29 loss cited by Mann, and it is strong circumstantial evidence that the plane cited by Mann was Dad's third plane.

The circumstances of this loss (but not the plane's serial number) are detailed in a report written by Dad for headquarters and found in his scrapbook. The fact of a loss under these circumstances is reported in the 20th AAF mission summary (Mission # 282). In none of these places is the plane's serial number reported. But the aircraft record card does show that this plane was ditched on July 23. There is little reason to doubt that 42-24890 was Dads third plane.

Trigger Mortis/358th Air Service Group (42-93911)

Crew 2408 returned to the States on August 14, 1945 in 42-93911. This plane had been named *Trigger Mortis* and had tail code CIRC R 18. Late in the war she was transferred to the 358th Air Service Group in the 504th Bomb Group to be used for transport of parts and personnel. The roster of the returning crew is shown in Table 5. This information was obtained from the orders issued to initiate flights back to the States.

So, finally, Dad's planes had been identified, as had all of his accidents and many of the events that he told me about when I was too young to care.